
The New InterUrban Rural Public Transportation System

Program	The New InterUrban Rural Public Transportation System
Sponsoring Organization	LifeStream Services, Inc., a 7-county Area Agency on Aging
City, State	Yorktown, Indiana
Service Type	Regular route and dial-a-ride services in rural portions of 7 counties started Jan 2002; connections to fixed route service in the major urban area; focus on individuals with no reliable transportation
Aging Network Roles	LifeStream, the AAA, is the transportation leader in this multi-county community: LifeStream designs and operates general public and specialized transit service outside the major urban area in 3 counties, operates one van in another county, and contracts for transportation services in 3 other counties
Service Area	LifeStream operates New InterUrban services in Delaware County [rural portions only] plus Jay and Randolph counties, Indiana, contracts for services in Blackford, Henry, and Madison counties, and operates a Title III van in Grant County
Service Area Population	105,000
Service Area Size (sq mi)	1,229 sq miles in Delaware, Jay, and Randolph counties
Data for Year Ending	Fiscal year ending June 30, 2003
One-way Trips per Year	81,089
Annual Expenses	\$717,231 [about 10% of the AAA's budget]
Cost/Trip	\$8.84
Number of Vehicles	14
Major Funding Sources	Indiana DOT, AAA, contracts with other agencies, Medicaid waiver funds, development revenue, county grants and foundations, Older Hoosier revenue, client contributions, others.
Coordinating Agencies	Indiana DOT, Muncie Indiana Transit Service [MITS], developmental disabilities agencies, emergency response services.

Services: The New InterUrban provides regular route and door to door transportation for general public riders with a focus on persons with limited transportation options. Services are provided from 7 am through 6 pm Monday through Friday, and from 10 am until 2 pm on Saturday.

Riders include seniors, persons with disabilities, low income and unemployed persons, the general public, and children.

Program Evolution and Structure: LifeStream, a non-profit corporation that focuses on programs serving seniors and persons with disabilities, was established in 1975. During the 2003 Fiscal Year, LifeStream served more than 15,000 clients, 57 percent of whom were age 75 and older and 37 percent of whom had incomes at or below poverty level.

LifeStream had been providing transportation services to seniors and persons with disabilities since the late 1970s. In early 2001, LifeStream submitted a Rural Transportation Feasibility Study to the Indiana Department of Transportation that called for the re-establishment of the public transportation services that had previously existed in rural eastern Indiana, an inter-urban system of electric trolleys. With a grant of \$188,000 in federal funds from the Indiana DOT, LifeStream was able to garner enough other funding to start general public transportation operations in rural eastern Indiana (now referred to as “the new inter-urban transportation services”) on January 2, 2002.

Characteristics of Trips and Riders: The New InterUrban serves a variety of populations in Delaware, Jay, and Randolph counties, including seniors, persons with disabilities, low income and unemployed persons, the general public, and children.

Fares vary according to distance. The shortest, least expensive rides cost 50 cents one way. The most expensive rides (those of 30 miles or more) cost the passenger \$8.00 one way.

Coordination Actions: LifeStream’s coordination activities have been particularly successful in a wide range of areas, including planning for community needs, adapting funding, and moving people efficiently.

- **Planning for Community Needs.** The New InterUrban system was a direct result of an extensive planning process that convinced state and local leaders of the need to support rural public transportation in eastern Indiana. LifeStream, whose overall organizational mission is to “improve and extend the quality of life for those most at risk of institutionalization,” organized a feasibility study and volunteer planning process with more than 40 local community leaders. The Transportation Feasibility Study Committee conducted a survey of the local population to identify what activities people could not accomplish because of a lack of transportation, what times transportation was needed, and the destinations to which people needed access. Most frequently stated unmet travel needs were for medical appointments, grocery shopping, and other shopping. In a prior Community Needs Assessment, 18 percent of survey respondents said that inadequate public transportation was a major or moderate problem in their neighborhoods. Other issues addressed in the 2001 Rural Transportation Feasibility Study included mobility needs of employers, mobility needs of social service agencies and their clients, major regional trip generators, existing transportation services, potential demands for new services, an assessment of organizations that might fulfill a lead role in providing new services, and a budget for these services.

Based on the results of the planning process, funding commitments were successfully obtained from the Indiana DOT, local county governments, participating agencies, and LifeStream.

- **Adapting Funding.** LifeStream has been quite successful in augmenting federal and state funds for aging services with other funding sources. They have received unusually strong support from the Indiana DOT and from local county governments. They have also received cash contracts and contributions from other human service agencies and local foundations. For the nine months ended March 2004, The New InterUrban received 3 percent of its operating revenue from its riders.
- **Moving People Efficiently.** Since the inception of New InterUrban services in January 2002, the number of trips provided by LifeStream has quadrupled. By serving multiple types of riders who are supported by a variety of funding sources, The New InterUrban has been able to achieve good productivity levels and excellent cost per trip numbers.

Benefits of Coordination: LifeStream reports a wide range of benefits from coordinating transportation services in eastern Indiana:

- **Level of Transportation Service.** LifeStream is providing public transportation to parts of eastern Indiana that have not had any public transportation since before World War II. LifeStream contracts for transportation services in those counties in which they do not now provide direct services. (One of these counties has contracted for New InterUrban services beginning in January 2005.)
- **Level of Transportation Service Integration.** LifeStream has created a formal service integration program with MITS, the public transit system in Muncie (the major urban center of the region). Called "Connect "N" Go," this program allows riders on the New InterUrban (primarily a rural transportation service) and on MITS (providing rides only within the municipal boundaries of Muncie) to use transfers and passes from one system on the other system. There are four transfer points within or adjacent to Muncie, and the schedules of both systems have been adjusted to facilitate speedy transfers between the two services.
- **Service Effectiveness.** Like other successful coordinated transportation services, The New InterUrban is able to combine different types of trips and individuals because of their support from a variety of funding sources.
- **Cost Effectiveness.** The trips are less expensive for both human service agencies (LifeStream and others) and the riders because the vehicle trips are shared by various populations. The New InterUrban has achieved very good cost per trip figures.
- **Community Mobility.** Few other transportation options exist for persons without cars in eastern Indiana. Taxi services have found it difficult to survive in even the largest communities, and Greyhound's intercity services are marginal at best. The New InterUrban has greatly expanded mobility for persons with mobility limitations, and their integrated transfer program with the region's largest public transportation operator has further expanded the impact of The New InterUrban's service.

Challenges and Opportunities: Long-distance medical and shopping trips (primarily to Indianapolis, about 70 miles away) remain difficult for persons with limited mobility. Greyhound

offers minimal services between Muncie and Indianapolis, but because of limited trip frequencies at inconvenient times of day, one-day out-patient medical treatments at the Indiana University Medical Center in Indianapolis require two nights of hotel expenses if traveling by Greyhound. Greyhound services to Anderson, Indiana were terminated in April 2004. LifeStream initiated conversations with Greyhound and the Indiana DOT to attempt to find a way to provide intercity public transportation services for the region, but these efforts have not been successful to date. Also, while LifeStream has succeeded in obtaining local government funding for The New InterUrban from all three counties in the primary service area, Delaware County, the most populous of the three counties and the destination of most trips, lags behind the other counties in their relative contributions. Permanent state DOT funding support for rural public transportation in this region has also not been finally confirmed. Despite such challenges, LifeStream has demonstrated a high level of success in providing cost-effective services to a wide range of customers, and is actively engaged in addressing these issues. Plans call for an expansion of New InterUrban services into Blackford County in January 2005.

Summary: After an extensive and detailed planning process, The New InterUrban Rural Public Transportation System has re-established some of the mobility lost when inter-urban trolleys discontinued their services in eastern Indiana decades ago. LifeStream has successfully coordinated a variety of funding sources to provide cost-effective transportation to seniors and other persons with special transportation needs and the general public. A special program integrates rural transportation services with urban public transit operations.

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